

Troops train for convoy ambushes



By Spc. Mark Watson

Members of the 2nd Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, set up a perimeter during the convoy operations portion of the unit's mobilization training at Fort Sill, Okla.

By Spc. Mark Watson

129th MPAD

FORT SILL, Okla. — Almost daily, news agencies report of convoys in Iraq coming under attack from small arms fire or improvised explosive devices. To combat the casualties the Army has taken measures to keep soldiers in convoys safer.

The Army has used lessons learned from the battlefield to better protect the troops by modifying vehicles, but more importantly, it is augmenting preventive training into the validation process of deploying units.

"A big piece of our training is convoy operations," said Lt. Col. Jeff Marlette, commander of 2nd Battalion, 147th Field Artillery (Mobile Launch Rocket System.) "We are learning to react under different situations such as IEDs."

The practice of coming under fire in a convoy came in January at Fort Sill, Okla., where the unit was preparing to deploy to Iraq. As a column of artillerymen in Humvees traveled down a dirt road a call on the radio, "3 O' Clock, 150 meters, troops in the open," brought the soldiers to full alert. As the "Troops" appeared, the South Dakota soldiers opened fire. Dust kicked up from live rounds striking the dirt near the targets and from the Humvees as they increased their speed to get out of the danger zone.

Although the soldiers occasionally trained on convoy operations, this was the first time they fired from the vehicles.

"We've done a little training before on convoy operations," Pfc. Jared Bloom, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Service, 2nd Bn., 147th FA. "But this is the first time we are using live rounds. We are learning to take special care of our weapons. I am a

Continued Ambush pg. 3

Single mom keeps positive outlook during mobilization

By Spc. Shannon Crane

129th MPAD

PARKSTON — Family and friends gathered together in Parkston to bid farewell to Company C, 153rd Engineer Battalion on Dec. 3. The unit was activated to support Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the activation ceremony provided its soldiers one last opportunity to spend time with loved ones.

In the somber atmosphere, amidst the tearful goodbyes, Spc. Miranda Schroeder, a communications specialist and single mom, took it upon herself to remain upbeat and focused.

"I'm trying to have a positive attitude about all this," said Schroeder. "I don't know if it's really hit me yet or not, but I have a really good outlook on it and I just want to go and get it done."

On the civilian side, Schroeder works as a store clerk in Mitchell coordinating weddings and birthday parties. She said that her employers told her it would be difficult to replace her so quickly, and that they are really going to miss her.

"They're really supportive, and they're just excited for me to come back home," Schroeder said.

The biggest challenge for Schroeder's

family is how her son, Simon, will deal with the transition.

"It'll be hard getting used to it, thinking about how my son is not going to quite know what's going on," said Schroeder. "My family has been so supportive through all of this. They're trying to have a positive outlook, and they just want me to be safe and come home."

Schroeder is not the only member of her family serving her state and country. Her older brother is currently stationed in Iceland serving in the Navy, and her younger brother is also a member of

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109th Group to be activated

By **Spec. Chris Ripka**

129th MPAD

RAPID CITY — For the second time in less than two decades, the 109th Engineer Group from Rapid City is being called upon to do its nation's bidding. This time, however, they will not see the desert sands as they did in the Gulf War.

Nearly 15 years have gone by since the 109th was deployed in January 1990 to support Operation Desert Storm. This time the men and women of the 109th are called upon to carve out their

piece in history in the heart of terrorism country - Afghanistan.

Commanding the 109th is Col. Nancy J. Wetherill, the Group's first female commander. Her expectations are as high as her standards, as evidenced when a local television reporter asked her if she thought that her unit was ready. Wetherill said. "The 109th maintains a constant state of

readiness. Each soldier knows what they need to do when the call comes."

As with other units of the South Dakota National Guard, some of the older, more experienced members got out of the Guard
Continued 109th pg. 5



By Spec. Mark Watson

Spec. Andy Heymans removes a SINGARs radio from a 109th Group Humvees in preparation for the unit to deploy overseas.

the Coyote

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235th receives welcome home

By **Spec. Mark Watson**

129th MPAD

RAPID CITY — Among family and friends, 91 members of the 235th Military Police Company, who deployed to Fort Carson, Colo., in support of Operation Noble Eagle, returned home safely and were honored in a deactivation ceremony Jan. 10 in the Stevens High School Auditorium.

Supporters of the 235th packed the auditorium, some carrying welcome home banners, others carrying flowers welcoming home the MPs who replaced Ft. Carson soldiers who deployed overseas.

"The 235th answered the call and did what they were supposed to do," Maj. Gen. Michael A. Gorman, the adjutant general for South Dakota, said. "I will never forget the day we activated the unit. I can always picture in my mind the children with the soldiers. Some are here today, now they are

almost a year older, and we know how much sacrifice goes into that."

One of the soldiers who made that sacrifice was Spec. Fred Heinrich, an MP. Upon seeing his daughters, he snuck up behind them and put his arms around them.

"I gave them a hug and a kiss," Heinrich said. "The mood is surreal. It hasn't seemed like we have been gone for 11 months."

Fellow MP, Pfc. Alecia Ramsdell, didn't want to leave home, but not because she had a child.

"I had just gotten back from basic and (Advanced Individual Training)," Ramsdell said. "I had just been back for two weeks. It was like 'Yes, I'm home, then wait! I'm not.'"

Although she didn't want to go, she did say it was nice being able to use her training right away.

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Ambush training to save soldiers

Continued from pg. 1

mechanic, so this is all new to me doing these different operations.”

Leaders and trainers preach situational awareness to the soon-to-deploy Guardsmen.

“We have to know our position at all times,” Sgt. Chad Clemens said. “You have to know what to do in the convoy, where the driver is and you have to be alert at all times.”

While soldiers learn procedures to live by while in Iraq, soldiers already engaged in

the war have taken measures to protect themselves by modifying their vehicles.

Marlette said soldiers are retrofitting their vehicles, placing sand bags on the floor to protect from an explosion from underneath and they are placing sheets of metal in the doors to add a new layer of a protection for the soldiers.

A January 12, Associated Press, press release, stated soldiers are feeling more confident about riding in vehicles.

According to the release, “Our number one concern was IEDs (improvised

explosive devices),” said Spc. Christopher Roessner, 20, of Ventura, Calif., while sitting in the back of one of the strengthened vehicles. “I feel a whole lot safer sitting in the back of one of these Humvees than the old ones.”

The soldiers are finishing up their training period, Marlette said his soldiers were doing a remarkable job.

“The troops are doing absolutely outstanding,” Marlette said. “If I could change anything, I don’t know if I would change a thing.”

Mom maintains attitude, focus

Continued from pg. 1

Company C and will be joining the unit overseas sometime this summer.

Though her life has undergone many sudden changes as a result of the activation, Schroeder said that maintaining a great attitude has been the best thing for her and would advise soldiers in similar circumstances to do the same.

“I think that’s the only thing that’s kept me sane though all of this,” Schroeder said.

After conducting pre-mobilization training at Fort Carson, Colo., approximately 250 members of the 153rd deployed to Kuwait in mid-February.



Spc. Miranda Schroeder holds her son, Simon, at the Company C, 153rd Engineer Battalion activation ceremony.

By Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews

State lists soldier, NCO of year

By Spc. Mark Watson

129th MPAD

RAPID CITY — South Dakota hosted its annual Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Awards Banquet, January 17 in Pierre to recognize the top soldiers and NCOs within the South Dakota National Guard.

Selected as South Dakota’s best traditional Guardsmen was Pfc. Jared Digmann, of the 665th Maintenance Company. Digmann will also represent South Dakota at the 5th U.S. Army Soldier of the Year Awards in late March in San Antonio, Texas.

The Active Guard and Reserve Soldier of the Year went to Spc. Alicen McKnight of the 1085th Medical Company, Rapid City.

This year’s top M-Day NCO award went to Sgt. Tashie Moore, 88th Troop Command, Brookings. Moore will represent the state at the 5th Army NCO of the Year Awards.

Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Kinstad, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery Brigade, received the nod as the best AGR noncommissioned officer.

Fellow soldiers competing for the titles were: Spc. Bradley Sudbeck, Joint Forces Headquarters, Rapid City; Spc. Arthur Morris, 109th Engineer Battalion, Sturgis; and Spc. Chasity Javers, HHB, 147th FA, Sioux Falls.

Competing NCOs were: Sgt. 1st Class Dan Konechne, 1st Battalion, 196th Regiment; Staff Sgt. Randal Decker, 1085th Medical Company; Staff Sgt. Dennis Schley, 665th Maintenance Company; Sgt. Jason Richmond, 155th Engineer Detachment; and Sgt. Mark Weber, HHB 147th FA.

**Taxes are due
April 15**

Guard leader visits troops in Iraq, Kuwait

SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY — Not since World War II has South Dakota's National Guard responded in such magnitude to international conflict. With nearly two thirds of his force called to active duty to battle the war against terrorism, the Guard's top leader got a first-hand look at the soldiers' efforts in Iraq and Kuwait in late November.

Accepting the Army's invitation, Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, adjutant general, completed a three-day tour of U.S. military operations in both Iraq and Kuwait and was able to visit briefly with soldiers and leaders from all six of his units that are supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"The troops attitudes were upbeat and they are all working hard," Gorman said. "I think they have accepted the fact that they will be on the ground for a year and are making the most of it."

The general's tour was part of a new program set up to help leaders of the Reserve forces get a better understanding of the operations and conditions their units are facing in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan.

Gorman, along with adjutants general from seven other states, got a look at the big picture during a briefing with the staff of Lt. Gen. David McKiernan, the Coalition Forces Land Component Commander.

They were briefed on the overall mission, the disposition of forces in Kuwait, the support structure for forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the preparation needed to rotate forces in the region.

"I got a better handle on the obstacles the Army is facing in rotating 150,000 troops out of and into the area in the next four months," said Gorman. He emphasized that the rotation will be a big job.

"We're talking about a movement of soldiers with the magnitude of those in World War II," he said.

That first day in Kuwait, Gorman also got a chance to visit with both the 727th and 740th Transportation Companies at their respective base camps in the desert, going from tent to tent to talk with South Dakota soldiers.

"I just thanked them for their sacrifices," he said. "I really wanted to just reach out and grab them all up and take them home. But they've got a job to do over there and they all seem to feel good about their accomplishments."

Gorman admits he was set back a bit by the tough living conditions the soldiers had to endure.

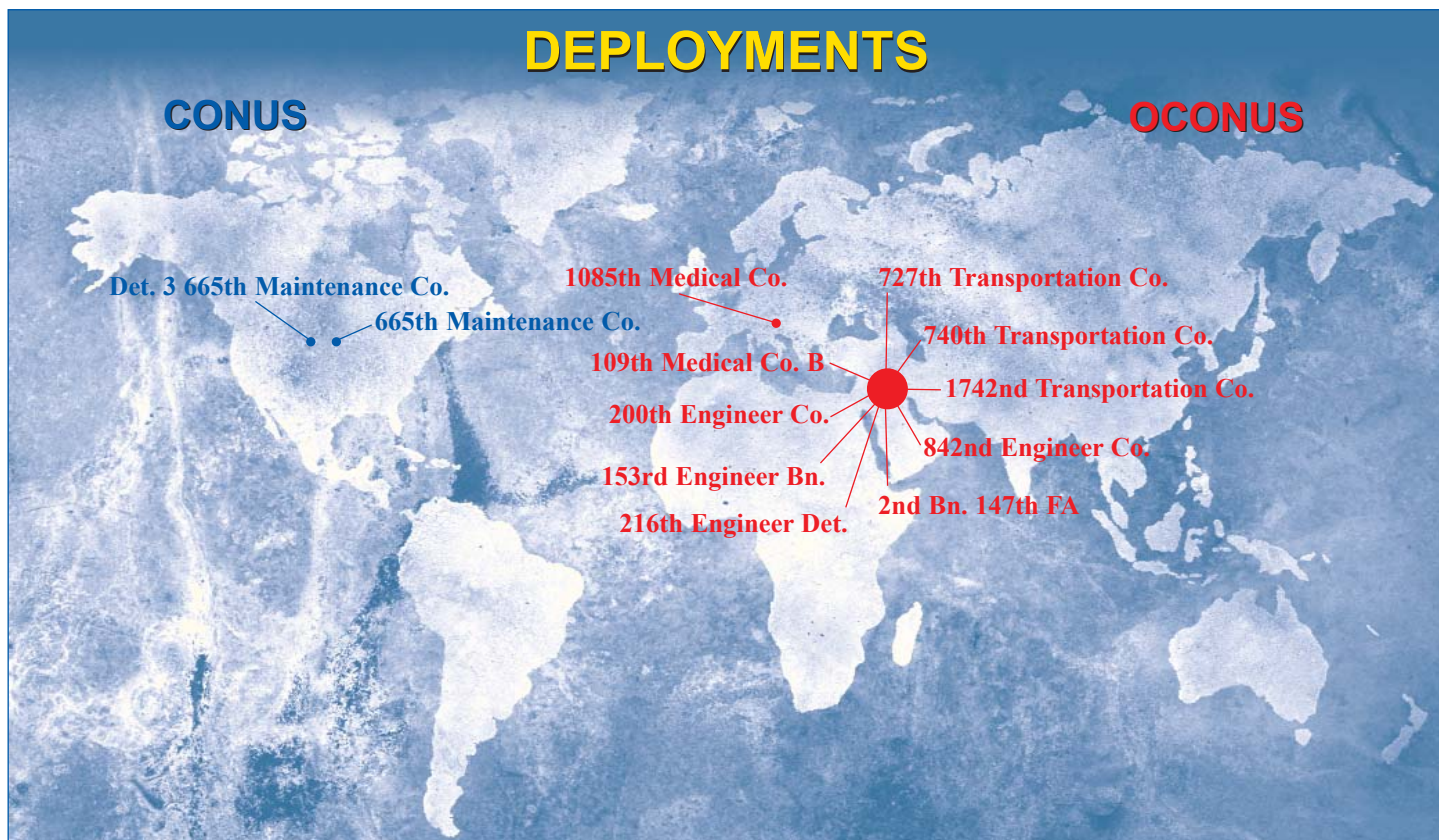
"They're far from anything you'd want to live in," he said. "But improvements are ongoing."

Outfitted in his Kevlar helmet, full body armor, and his weapon, the general flew from Camp Doha, Kuwait, to Baghdad International airport in a C-130 cargo plane.

Like all other aircraft flying into Baghdad, the C-130 cargo plane transporting the group used defensive maneuvers on its approach to the airport.

"It's a good thing I couldn't see out the windows," he said. "It was quite a ride. The plane flew low over Iraq, constantly

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109th to deploy to Afghanistan

Continued from pg. 2

when they returned home from their Gulf War deployment. Many of the young men and women who replaced them have never been on a real world mission, let alone a war. They will face challenges they have never known before, and they will have to rely on those few veterans who have been there to help them and guide them to accomplish their mission.

The 109th is being mobilized to support Operation Enduring Freedom. The Group will be the theater command and control element that will task out missions and oversee other units while answering to the Joint Task Force commander.

The commander of the 109th Group Headquarters is Capt. Randy Griebel. Griebel is a wildlife biologist who works for the state forestry department in Custer. He said that his biggest worry is his wife, who is about to have their second child.

"My main concern is not being able to help her out with the new baby," Griebel said.

Since this is his second deployment in less than three years, Griebel brings with him experience and knowledge that will prove to be a great asset to his company. Griebel said, "We're in the crawl state in some of the tasks we know that we are going to do at mob station, things like CTT and convoy operations. We're sitting well for where we are at up to this point, but we will be completely up to speed by the time we leave mob station."

The company first sergeant is Tad

Auker. He is responsible for the soldiers' welfare while they are away from home. He said, "There is nothing more important than taking care of the people assigned to you. Now that doesn't mean holding their hands and wiping their noses, but we can make sure that they have everything that they need to accomplish their mission and ensure that they will live as comfortably as they possibly can."

In preparing his own family, Auker takes a positive approach and stresses the importance of keeping the family informed.

"The unknowns are what make it the most difficult. The things we have been counseled to do is to get as much information to the families as we can so they might understand what we are doing and why we are doing it," Auker said.

Even though 1st Sgt. Auker has not been on a deployment of this nature before, he has a strong understanding of the bigger picture. Auker said, "The 109th Group has a long history of working with active duty components in the different warfighter exercises, ... so we have a reputation as a very professional organization and have engineering contacts all over the world. So it's not a surprise that we were called upon to be a supporting element."

Auker also added, "We have a lot of very experienced NCOs in the Group headquarters with a variety of experiences from Desert Storm to various warfighter and ODT deployments."

Staff Sgt. Andy Gorman, who works full

time with the 109th Group Headquarters, said, "I look at the positives when something like this comes up. My wife and I figure that this is definitely better than the alternative."

A Sturgis native, Gorman joined the Army in 1992. He and his wife have two children. Looking ahead, Gorman states, "I want people to look back on this and see the good that we did for these people."

Spc. Jay Schrieber is a budget analyst for the South Dakota National Guard Counter Drug Program. He was one of the original members of the program when it started up about seven years ago. Schrieber said, "Nobody was here to train me, so it is going to be a challenge to train someone else to do my job while I am away."

Schrieber planned to get married later in the year, but has decided to move the wedding date ahead.

"My fiancé is a little worried about me, and that's understandable," he said. "However, this way I know that she will be taken care of when I leave."

Schrieber said it best when he stated his personal motto: "Do your best in everything that you do and don't worry about the things that you can't control and just be nice to people." Schrieber also added some of his personal views. "As big as this deployment is to us and our families, it's a small part of the overall war on terrorism. We cannot let the men and women who died on 9-11 be forgotten. I want people to be proud of what we did."

South Dakota general visits combat zones

Continued from pg. 4

maneuvering and then we just dropped right down on the runway."

The group traveled to one of Saddam's palaces where top officials outlined the situation in Iraq.

At the airport, he met with leaders from the two South Dakota units stationed there, the 842nd Engineer Company and Company B, 109th Medical Battalion.

"I wish I could have toured those units' operations, but our time in Baghdad was very limited," Gorman said. "Security was so tight."

Gorman was quite surprised at how nice the weather was in Baghdad. Temperatures in November ranged from highs in the

70s with low dipping into the 40s.

"It was raining when we got there," he said. "Someone said it was the first rain since the conflict began. Every soldier I met would say, 'You should have been here when it was 130 degrees.'"

After a short flight to Camp Anaconda, about 30 miles northeast of Baghdad, Gorman met with soldiers from the 200th Engineer Company and the 1742nd Transportation Company who were eating at the local dining facility.

In visiting with the soldiers, Gorman believes that the new leave policy, where selected soldiers get a chance to go home for 15 days, has really helped improve troop morale.

"I'm glad I got a chance to go to Iraq," he said. "I now have a better idea of the situation my troops are facing."

Commander's Corner

AG Comments

Though it has been less than two years since the war on terrorism began, we are still living in difficult times. Some of our soldiers have returned home safely, yet others are still fulfilling their one-year "boots on the ground" obligation. The citizens and soldiers of this state have done their part for their nation, and I am extremely proud of their accomplishments. I look forward to participating in the homecoming celebrations and recognizing the many achievements of our fine soldiers.

One of the ways our troops are being recognized is through a program called the Freedom Salute campaign.

It is one of the largest Army National Guard recognition endeavors in history, designed to publicly acknowledge Army Guard soldiers and those who supported them during the President's call to duty for Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Eligible soldiers include those who were mobilized directly under one of the three Operational Orders or in support of one of the three Operational Orders for more than 30 days (to include state active duty mobilized soldiers and Title 10 soldiers).

Each eligible soldier will receive an encased American Flag, a sequentially numbered commemorative coin, a "Defender of Freedom" certificate and a lapel insignia.

Married soldiers' spouses will receive a lapel insignia, while



soldiers who are considered a center of influence with young people will be given a Future Soldier Footlocker Kit that includes the Daring Eagle board game, Mission Command game, ARNG trading cards/case and comic book.

In addition, each soldier will be able to recognize one center of influence (COI) for outstanding support during the soldier's mobilization. This recognition will be in the

form of a commemorative lapel insignia and a medallion with ribbon. Two additional levels of recognition will be presented to the unit's choice of a person or organization deserving the Outstanding COI and Distinguished COI honors. The Outstanding COI is an individual or organization that prominently stood out as most helpful to the soldiers during mobilization and will receive a framed mosaic American Flag print. The Distinguished COI is an individual or organization the unit felt was most helpful to its soldiers and their families during mobilization and will receive an award.

Michael A. Gorman
MG, SDNG
The Adjutant General

SCSM Comments

Over the past year and a half, approximately 3,500 of this state's finest soldiers and airmen have been activated to serve their country. Currently, there are at least 1,600 soldiers still serving overseas, and I am certain they are anxious to hop the "freedom bird" home. Now that their return is close at hand, I have concerns that this excitement may lead to complacency. Not a day goes by that I don't think about the dangers our troops face, and how important it is for them to stay focused on their tasks.

The mission is not complete until our soldiers come home safely.

Speaking of missions, I want to take



this opportunity to recognize the important, but often overlooked, mission of the support staff to include Personnel, Operations, Finance and Logistics. The personnel who work for these sections have traveled hundreds of miles and have spent countless hours preparing soldiers for deployment. Their dedication to their fellow Guardsmen make them an asset to their sections, as well as to the units they support, and I extend my gratitude to each and every one of them. Please know that your efforts have not gone unnoticed.

As I reflect on the various mobilizations of our Guard units, I am reminded of just how much the role of the National Guard has changed, and how important it is for all of us who wear the uniform to change with it. Our country relies on us now more than ever before, and as more demands are placed upon us, our readiness is the key to our success. Deployment is no longer a mere "possibility" but a "probability", and it is necessary for all of us to be physically and mentally prepared. No matter what our professions are, we are all soldiers first.

Michael L. Birnbaum
CSM, SDARNG
State Command Sergeant Major

Remember
set your clocks forward 1 hour
April 4

MPs return from CONUS deployment

Continued from pg. 2

"At AIT you learn the basics," she said. "When you get there it's a whole new thing, so it was neat being able to go right from AIT to my job."

During the 11 months that the 235th was deployed, the MPs responded to domestic disturbance calls, bar fights, accidents, drug busts, driving under the influence calls, and were involved in high speed chases. The Guard unit performed the job of three active duty units that were deployed and with 91 soldiers, they held down the job that 150 troops previously did, Capt. Doug Goshorn, the unit's commander, said.

"They may have not earned a combat patch as our fellow Guardsmen who deployed to Iraq," Goshorn said. "But their service is every bit as necessary in this global war on terrorism."

Gorman added that during a recent trip to Ft. Carson, Brig. Gen. Raymond Carpenter, the state's assistant adjutant general, Army, talked to the deputy commander of the 7th Infantry Division and then told what the infantry commander said.

"He said that the 235th was the best MP company that he had seen in the entire U.S. Army. Not just the Guard," Gorman said.

"I can't say how proud I am of the 235th," he added. "Thank you for all your proud service."



By Spc. Mark Watson
Spc. Ole Segard holds his 18-month old son, Aric, during the 235th Military Police Company deactivation ceremony. The unit returned January 10 from a deployment to Fort Carson, Colo.



By Sgt. Wes Nowitzki
Spc. Kevin Millard from the 155th Engineer Detachment cuts notches out of a piece of trim for the outside of the playhouse. The 9 x 8 ft. playhouse built for a raffle to raise money for the Court Appointed Special Advocate Association. In past years the playhouse has raised more than 7,000 dollars for CASA. The playhouse will be displayed at the Rushmore Mall and raffle tickets will go on sale at the end of March.

Engineers depart U.S. soil



By Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews

Members of the 153rd Engineer Battalion run thru concealment smoke during their Military Operations in Urbanized Terrain training shortly before the unit arrived in Kuwait.

By Spc. Mark Watson

129th MPAD

FORT CARSON, COLO. — All 418 members of the 153rd Engineer Battalion arrived safely in Kuwait Sunday after spending nearly a day in the air from their mobilization station, Fort Carson, Colo.

The South Dakota National Guardsmen boarded the planes bound for the desert country, the last group leaving U.S. soil Saturday. In their final days at Fort Carson, both excitement and thoughts of the unknown grew.

"I am excited and happy to get out of Fort Carson and get on with the mission," said Staff Sgt Dallas Vallery, from Rapid City, who volunteered to fill a position in

the unit's personnel shop. "I am getting nervous, as I hope everyone would be."

The 153rd, with units located in Huron, Platte, Parkston, De Smet, Madison, Winner and Wagner, received its activation order in November, and mobilized to Fort Carson December 7. While at its mobilization station, the members received refresher training as well as training the soldiers have never conducted.

"We've had almost 60 days of pretty intense training," said Maj. Mike Werdel, the unit's executive officer. "We've done 21 days of infantry training including convoy live fire training."

The soldiers also became proficient

with their weapons, received first aid training and, for the first time, they trained for Military Operations in Urbanized Terrain.

"We've received excellent training," 1st Sgt Joey Struwe, from Estelline and the Company B first Sergeant, said. "A lot of the (infantry tactics) we never had training on before, and the guys have soaked it up like a sponge. We've been working hard for the last two months, so we are ready to get going so we can come back home."

With only hours before they boarded the plane, the soldiers had time to reflect on their upcoming missions. While some slept, others watched TV while others were lost in thought.

"I'm just thinking about what's coming up," Spc. Dale Medlin said. "You know, you watch TV and wonder where you are going and what you will be doing. I only know we are going to Iraq."

Another engineer said he wanted to make a difference in the way the Iraqis looked at his fellow soldiers.

"I want to go over there and make things more peaceful for them and for us," Pfc. Matthew Kreul said. "I want to try to change their minds and the way they look at Americans."

For the newest members of the unit, the reality of the deployment has just started to hit them.

"It's kicking in a little," Pierre resident, Spc. Ian Farnsworth, said. "When I saw our room empty, that's when it started to hit me. I mean that's been our home for the last two months."

"Our moral goes up and down, day by day," he said. "It is usually high, but toward the end of the day it kind of drops. But then we get back (to the barracks) and we are ready to go again."

"I'm just ready to get to some place warm," he joked.

The 153rd plans to be in the Gulf region for one year.

Former Adjutant General receives Williamson Award

By Sgt. Matt Johnson

South Dakota National Guard Public Affairs Office
PIERRE — Retired Major General Philip G. Killey received the prestigious Williamson Militia Man Award during the South Dakota National Guard's "Legislative Dining Out" ceremony Feb. 12, in Pierre.

Killey received his commission in 1963 through Officer Training School, Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. After pilot training at Reese Air Force Base in Texas and Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, Killey served a tour of duty in Southeast Asia from 1967-68.

Killey left active duty in 1969 and joined the South Dakota Air National Guard in 1970. He held numerous positions in the S.D. Air Nat. Guard to include commander of the 114th Tactical Fighter Group from 1983 to 1987. His overwhelming success as commander led Governor George Mickelson to select him as Adjutant General for the South Dakota National Guard and head of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

After serving nearly two years as South Dakota's Adjutant General, Killey was again called to active duty by the Secretary of the Air Force in Washington, D.C. to serve as the Director of the Air National Guard from 1988 to 1994.

As a result of his outstanding performance as the Director of the Air National Guard, Killey was selected as the first guard member to serve as Commander, 1st Air Force - the Air Force command responsible for guarding America's skies, where he served until 1998.

In 1998, Governor Janklow asked Killey to again serve as the Adjutant General of the South Dakota National Guard and Secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs, from which he retired after more than 40 years of service in the U.S. military.

The Williamson "Militia Man" Award was established in 1987 by Maj. Gen. Ronald F. Williamson, who was the adjutant



By Sgt. Matt Johnson

Maj. Gen. Phillip G. Killey, (ret.), former Adjutant General second from left, accepts the Williamson Militiaman Award from Maj. Gen. Michael A. Gorman, the Adjutant General of the South Dakota National Guard, left, Governor M. Michael Rounds and Maj. Gen. Ronald Williamson (ret.) February 12 during the annual Legislative Dining Out in Pierre.

general at the time. The award recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the citizen-soldier through community leadership, support of the National Guard, and the defense of our country. The award, presented by Gov. Mike Rounds, Maj. Gen. Michael A. Gorman and Retired Maj. Gen. Ronald F. Williamson, is a U.S. Army Saber and Scabbard.

ESGR recognizes top military supporter

By Sgt. Matt Johnson

South Dakota National Guard Public Affairs Office

PIERRE — The South Dakota Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) recently presented the prestigious "2003 Pro Patria Award" to Citibank (South Dakota), N.A. The presentation was made Feb. 12, 2004 at the annual National Guard "Legislative Dining Out" in Pierre.

"Pro Patria" is the Latin expression meaning "for the nation." This award is given to an individual or company that has supported employees who are members of the Guard and Reserve. It symbolizes the patriotism shown by

adopting personnel policies that enable employees to fulfill National Guard and Reserve training and deployment obligations, thus contributing to the readiness and success of our nation's defense.

Citibank is a diverse financial company and the largest credit card issuer in North America, with approximately 3,200 workers in Sioux Falls. Citibank South Dakota employs 31 members of the South Dakota National Guard or Army Reserve.

In 2003, Citibank and the Citigroup Foundation contributed more than \$800,000 to over 100 grant partners in South Dakota, including the National Guard. Citibank is proud and committed

to supporting its military members, granting nearly 25,000 hours of military leave in 2003 to its employed members of the National Guard and Reserve.

In addition, since the activation of thousands of National Guard and Reserve troops to support Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, Citibank has implemented numerous incentive and benefit enhancements to ensure its military members and their families receive the maximum support possible during activations. These benefits go above and beyond what is required by law and benefits the soldiers and their families greatly.

Volunteers head family support

By Sgt. Matt Johnson

South Dakota National Guard Public Affairs Office

PIERRE — In the South Dakota National Guard, it's about Family. Family readiness greatly contributes to the overall readiness of the soldier and his unit.

With nearly 3,000 soldiers called to support Operation Iraqi Freedom and other overseas missions in the last year and a half, nearly every South Dakotan has been touched in some way by the recent military activations.

During these often stressful times, the S.D. Guard Family Program strives to provide support and understanding for the service members' families left behind, but they can't do it alone.

Volunteers work closely with the units' Family Support Groups to provide close-to-home, personal contact on a regular basis from someone in the same situation.

"It would be so difficult to reach all the families without the help of our volunteers," said Chief Warrant Officer Lynn Wright, S.D. Guard Family Program trainer. "These volunteers are their peers, so many times the other family members are more comfortable talking to and working with them. They can relate to and understand the situation."

As liaisons between the families and the S.D. Guard, these volunteers are crucial in assisting family members during this time of separation.

To better prepare these volunteers, the Family Program conducted Guard Family Team Building training in Chamberlain March 5 - 7.

The "train the trainer" course provides these volunteers with important information and the skills to effectively share this information with their peers in the Family Support Groups.

Upon returning to their groups, the volunteers will cover topics such as understanding the military's chain of command, military acronyms, stress and conflict management, crisis and coping as well as benefits, other entitlements and pay.



By Sgt. Matt Johnson

Family support volunteers gathered from across the state in Chamberlain March 5-7 for training to enhance their skills in communication - a key element in the Family Support mission.

"Our goal is for them to walk away with the skills and confidence to get up in front of people and present them with this important information," Wright said. "The classes these volunteers will be presenting are very beneficial to the families and will hopefully enrich their lives and make the separation a little easier."

During the course, the volunteers learn the importance of the planning process, setting specific objectives and goals, presentation tips and techniques as well as ideas on how to enhance their meetings. They also receive basic instruction on preparing PowerPoint presentations and the use of other visual aides. The course culminates with each volunteer making a presentation to the class.

"I've gotten a lot out of this course. I'll be much more comfortable, better prepared and effective when getting up in front of the group and presenting information," said Wendy Johnson, her husband of 3 months, 2nd Lt. Quenten Johnson, deployed with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 147th Field Artillery Brigade on

Dec. 27.

"I came with the goal of being able to get up in front of people and talk to them," said Jessica Long of Watertown, her Husband Specialist Scott Long is deployed with HHS, 2nd Bn., 147th FA. "The course this weekend really helped me."

Both Long and Johnson feel the Family Support Groups play a vital role during deployments.

"They are so important. They give you a chance to get to know the people going through the same thing at the same time that you're going through," said Johnson, who spent only 2 weeks with her husband before he deployed. "It's an extra comfort because they know how you feel."

"They're great to get everyone together and share what your soldiers have shared with you about their experiences," said Long, a mother of 3 young children. "It really helps to get things out and talk about them with people in the same situation who really understand what you're going through."